

**WHAT IS CLAIMED AS NEW AND DESIRED TO BE SECURED BY LETTERS PATENT
OF THE UNITED STATES IS:**

1. An image forming method comprising:
charging an image bearer with a charger;
5 irradiating the image bearer with light to form
an electrostatic latent image thereon;
developing the electrostatic latent image with a toner
to form a toner image on the image bearer;
transferring the toner image onto a transfer sheet with
10 a transferer;
fixing the toner image on the transfer sheet upon
application of heat; and
cleaning a surface of the image bearer with a cleaner,
wherein the toner comprises:
15 a binder resin;
a colorant; and
a zirconium compound including zirconium and at
least one of an aromatic oxycarboxylic acid and a salt thereof,
said zirconium compound having a main diffraction peak (A) at
20 a Bragg (2θ) angle of $5.5 \pm 0.3^\circ$ and a diffraction intensity
of from 2,000 to 15,000 cps when irradiated with a specific X-ray
of $\text{CuK}\alpha$.

2. The image forming method of Claim 1, wherein the
25 fixing step comprises:
transporting the transfer sheet having the toner image
thereon while at least one elastic roller contacts the transfer

sheet to fix the toner image thereon upon application of heat.

3. The image forming method of Claim 1, whererin the zirconium compound further has a sub-diffraction peak (B) at
5 a Bragg (2θ) angle of $31.6\pm0.3^\circ$ when irradiated with the specific X-ray of $\text{CuK}\alpha$, and wherein a diffraction intensity ratio (A/B) of the main diffraction peak (A) to the sub-diffraction peak (B) is from 3 to 25.

10 4. The image forming method of Claim 1, whererin the zirconium compound has an average particle diameter of from 0.2 to 4.0 μm .

15 5. The image forming method of Claim 1, whererin when the zirconium compound is subjected to an extraction treatment so as to be dispersed in an ion exchanged water at a concentration of $1.5 \times 10^{-4} \text{ g/cm}^3$, the ion exchanged water has a conductivity of from 5 to 20 S/cm.

20 6. The image forming method of Claim 1, whererin a content of the zirconium compound in the toner is from 0.5 to 5 parts by weight based on weight of the binder resin.

25 7. The image forming method of Claim 1, whererin the toner includes a volatile component in an amount not greater than 0.1 % by weight based on total weight of the toner when measured at a temperature of from 100 to 150 $^\circ\text{C}$.

8. The image forming method of Claim 1, whererin the at least one of an aromatic oxycarboxylic acid and a salt thereof is a 3,5-di-tertiary-butylsalicylic acid.

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9. The image forming method of Claim 1, whererin the binder resin comprises a polyester resin in an amount of from 50 to 100 % by weight based on total weight of the binder resin, and wherein the polyester resin has an acid value of from 5 to 25 mg KOH/g.

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10. The image forming method of Claim 1, whererin the charging is performed while contacting the charger with the image bearer.

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11. The image forming method of Claim 1, whererin the transferring is performed while contacting the transferer with the image bearer.

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12. The image forming method of Claim 1, whererin the cleaner is a cleaning blade.

13. A toner composition comprising:

a binder resin;

a colorant; and

a zirconium compound including zirconium and at least one of an aromatic oxycarboxylic acid or a salt thereof,

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wherein the zirconium compound having a main diffraction peak (A) at a Bragg (2θ) angle of $5.5\pm0.3^\circ$ and a diffraction intensity of from 2,000 to 15,000 cps when irradiated with a specific X-ray of $\text{CuK}\alpha$.

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14. The toner composition of Claim 13, whererin the zirconium compound further has a sub-diffraction peak (B) at a Bragg (2θ) angle of $31.6\pm0.3^\circ$ when irradiated with the specific X-ray of $\text{CuK}\alpha$, and wherein a diffraction intensity ratio (A/B) of the main diffraction peak (A) to the sub-diffraction peak (B) is from 3 to 25.

15. The toner composition of Claim 13, whererin the zirconium compound has an average particle diameter of from 0.2 to 4.0 μm .

16. The toner composition of Claim 13, whererin when the zirconium compound is subjected to an extraction treatment so as to be dispersed in an ion exchanged water at a concentration of $1.5 \times 10^{-4} \text{ g/cm}^3$, the ion exchanged water has a conductivity of from 5 to 20 S/cm.

17. The toner composition of Claim 13, wherein a content of the zirconium compound in the toner composition is from 0.5 to 5 parts by weight based on weight of the binder resin.

18. The toner composition of Claim 13, further comprising

a volatile component in an amount not greater than 0.1 % by weight based on total weight of the toner when measured at a temperature of from 100 to 150 °C.

5 19. The toner composition of Claim 13, whererin the at least one of an aromatic oxycarboxylic acid and a salt thereof is a 3,5-di-tertiary-butylsalicylic acid.

10 20. The toner composition of Claim 13, whererin the binder resin comprises a polyester resin in an amount of from 50 to 100 % by weight based on total weight of the binder resin, and wherein the polyester resin has an acid value of from 5 to 25 mg KOH/g.